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MX

Sand men...

The FIM Motocross World Championship lucked out with the Indian summer at the Grand Prix of the Netherlands in 2011. Familiar spring showers returned for round one of sixteen and the first of two sandy terrains in the 2012 series. Clement Desalle handles the soft stuff

Photo by Ray Archer





Watch Grand Prix highlights
VIDEO



Hold on chaps...

Another battle of Spain to start the 1000cc era in MotoGP. Dani Pedrosa needed no 'external assistance' for the race in Qatar but Losail remains one of three current tracks where he has yet to taste success in any class. Lorenzo has now finished on the podium at Doha for the last nine years in all categories

Photo by www.yamahamotogp.com





Ouch...

Even Heibye comes into closer contact with the rear wheel of his 250SX-F KTM than he would have wished. The Dutch sand was slippery and littered with hard bumps. It caught out a number of riders as the first round of the season also played host to the MX3 and Women's World Championship on the same weekend

Photo by Ray Archer







The cast...

The new line-up for another fresh era of MotoGP take-in the Losail grid in daylight. There was even a threat of rain in the desert at one stage that would have pushed the MotoGP opener back a day and wrecked TV schedules. Fortunately the fifth night race in MotoGP history went ahead as scheduled

Photo by Honda Pro images





MotoGP World Championship



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GRAND PRIX OF THE NETHERLANDS

VALKENSWAARD • APRIL 9th

MX1 winner: Tony Cairoli, KTM

MX2 winner: Jeffrey Herlings, KTM



BUSINESS AS USUAL

By Adam Wheeler, all photos by Ray Archer



DS



Two good starts helped Cairoli enormously. David Philippaerts (19) would crash with Gautier Paulin in the first corner of the second moto and ride the next 39 minutes with a broken clutch lever

Sun cream and red skin in 2011 was replaced by umbrellas and wet socks for the 2012 Grand Prix of the Netherlands in the shallow sand of Valkenswaard but the results sheets were nearly identical to the meeting one year ago.

The Dutch weather wavered but the Red Bull KTM team did not with Tony Cairoli launching his bid for a fourth consecutive MX1 title with his fourth victory at the site south of Eindhoven and Jeffrey Herlings maintaining a record that no other Grand Prix rider can boast with six moto chequered flags and three years

Herlings was so far ahead - almost one minute in the first moto - that his own fans could be forgiven for looking elsewhere for the action



unbeaten since he claimed Valkenswaard as an awkward fifteen year old in 2010.

On an edgy, nervy start to the FIM Motocross World Championship the formbooks were in force with the expected parties showing the best pace in both MX1 and MX2. The 'Herlings Show' was always going to be evident on

such proven ground for the teenager and if the inevitable moment of weakness or moment of abandon was hoped for by rivals and neutral fans then the KTM rider disappointed by being his usual attacking, fearless best. The Dutchman's feeling for grip and confidence on the sand is unparalleled.



Tommy Searle admitted that he would have been happy with a top four finish. Herlings correctly judged the Brit as his main title threat in the press conference afterwards

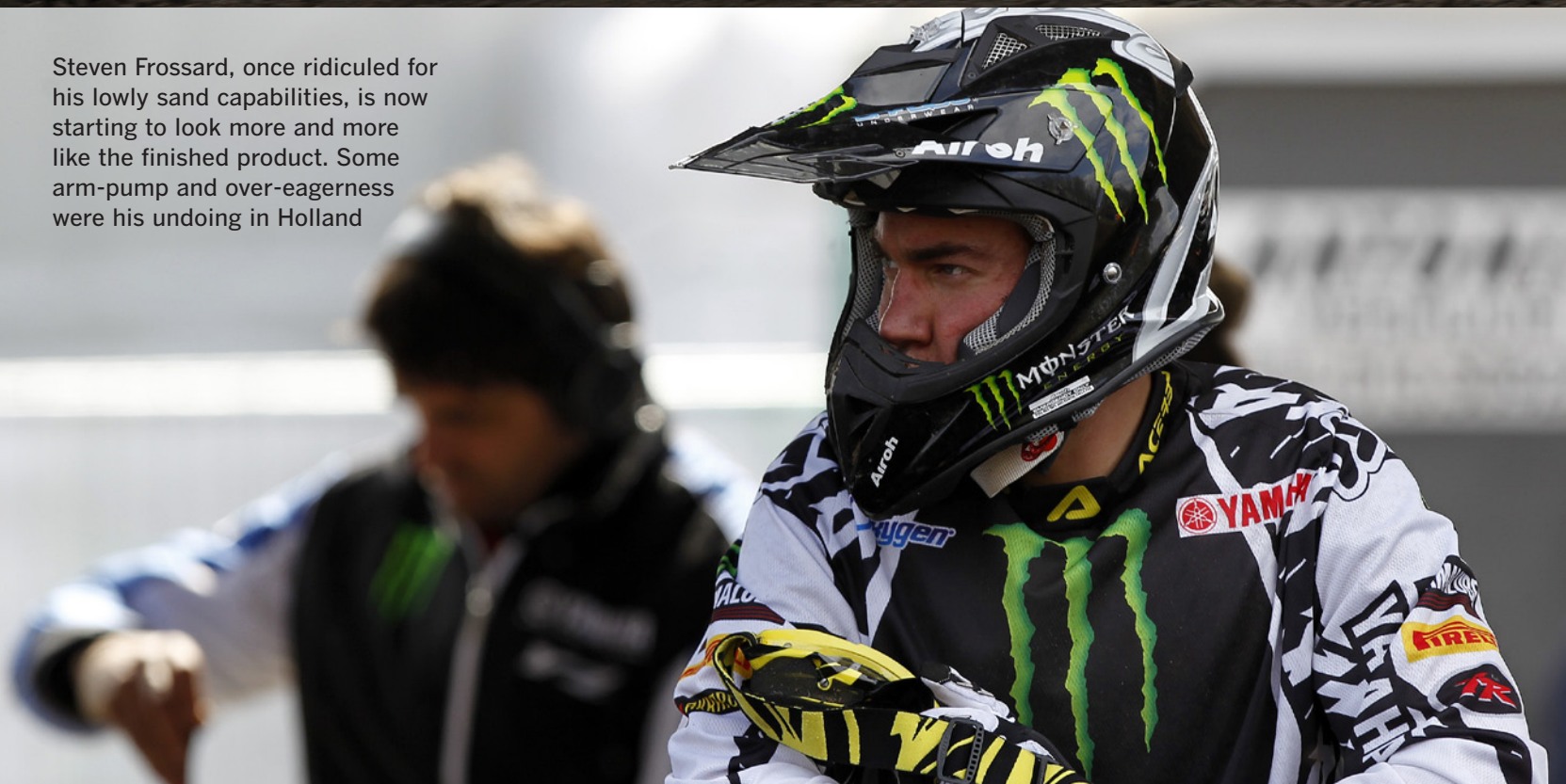
It has reached the stage now that MX2 peers have mentally prepared themselves for the second and third steps at best when it comes to a GP event in Holland. Those were duly filled by Floride Monster Energy Pro Circuit duo Joel Roelants and Tommy Searle; Roelants establishing himself as potential race winner

straight away after a few years in the doldrums making up the numbers in the top ten. Now on something other than a KTM for the first time in his Grand Prix career his capabilities on the Kawasaki will be interesting to chart when we get to hard-pack or into the hot weather. With the lack of outright track action marking



After a DNF and a fourth position in the past two years Desalle's second place was his best at Valkenswaard and in yellow

Steven Frossard, once ridiculed for his lowly sand capabilities, is now starting to look more and more like the finished product. Some arm-pump and over-eagerness were his undoing in Holland



the opening moto on the programme, the MX1 class carried even more expectation and the category should be special this year with the diversity of characters and equipment involved. Cairoli nailed his tactics for the sand perfectly. The Sicilian blended some of wild antics and aggressive approaches by Monster Energy

Yamaha's Steven Frossard and Rockstar Suzuki's Clement Desalle with his own experience and ability to charge hard at the right time to control the races from the midway point. Desalle got a little 'fresh' by pushing the space between his front wheel and that of Frossard (who was calmer and less error-prone in the



Four in a row for Cairoli who is looking for little milestones in the sport wherever he goes. Incidentally Investtradebank is a new series sponsor and the weight behind the Russian Grand Prix

second moto after running off the track twice in the first affair) to the limit in two consecutive turns. Frossard didn't bite and showed some maturity even if the blood must have been boiling at that point; the second moto of thirty-two for the season was not the moment for retribution.

Cairoli wasn't chased to the line and the closest finish of the leading sect was Frossard's valiant attempt to snare second place from Desalle in the first moto but the pair were separated by a second.



The rain came down in the second moto and it was a hard day for Bobryshev who was nursing pain in his right hand, hip, head, chest and abs thanks to a dislocated rib. His ride to twelfth considering the circumstances verged on heroic

Valkenswaard was not a classic Grand Prix but it was slick, and opened the FIM Motocross World Championship effectively in the most testing of seasonal climates. Importantly, post-race, the points tables do not show any major hurdles for the expected protagonists of 2012 and only Honda World Motocross Team's

Evgeny Bobryshev (hip and rib injuries) and CP377 Monster Energy Pro Circuit's Christophe Pourcel (unsatisfied with bike set-up and scored points in just one moto) were probably happy to get out of the gate as soon as possible on Monday afternoon.

A first Grand Prix in eight months for David Philippaerts.





Christophe Pourcel approached the track and rutted take-offs with apprehension. U happy with his setting the former world champion was outside of the point in the first moto. Some changes helped to ninth place in the second



Tanel Leok was also in the wars and riding with a sore arm and leg, not to mention a lack of bike time. The Estonian started poorly but was typically dogged in his attack of the motos. He finished ninth

Gautier Paulin, the rookie of the 2012 term, was quick on the works Kawasaki (fourth in the first moto) and gained a slew of positions in a second race fightback to seventh





Joel Roelants was one of several MX2 riders who appeared to have raised their game for 2012. Jake Nicholls, Jordi Tixier and Mel Pocock were some that shone out from the Dutch gloom



On the track Herlings stood every chance...
off it was another
matter entirely



Shaun Simpson goes through the rain for a solid Yamaha debut. The shallow sand was harder than ever for the race. The Scot said: "The rain made a difference but there is a hard base here and I even thought about going with a normal tyre instead of a sand scoop profile. The track wasn't ripped because of all the classes. The jump faces were slippery and you had to watch out." Jonathan Barragan, Nico Aubin and Ken De Dycker were some that tasted the sand



MX NEWS

YOUTHSTREAM CONFIRM ITALY TO FILL '12 'HOLE'

In a press conference on Sunday morning Youthstream President Giuseppe Luongo stated that the current 'vacancy' on the 2012 FIM Motocross World Championship – the Grand Prix of Europe, round fifteen of sixteen on September 9th – will be filled by another trip to Italy for the series and drop the country quota to fourteen as Holland already has two dates.

Understandably Luongo would not commit the names of the two venues in contention for the fixture for fear of affecting sales and interest of the upcoming Grand Prix of Italy at Fermo on the eastern Adriatic coast on April 29th. It is expected that the site of the GP of Europe will be announced at Fermo and the schedule will be complete.

In the same press gathering the Italian remarked that further races in South America and also the Far East (Thailand is already set for join the list in 2013 for two years) are likely to happen for '13.

It is another nudge to the manufacturers to consider motocross on a global scale rather than a 'regionalised' effort as most of the Grand Prix projects of the brands are financed through their European divisions.

Luongo is right about the market for motorised vehicles showing promise in other territories, and all but those considering the budget sheets will be encouraged by the 'world' view being applied to the championship. "Maybe not everybody agrees but the best way to beat the crisis is to go where the market is," he said.

"I want to see a better geographical spread on the calendar. The demands of the market demand this and we must move or die. We must also cover the world because we are a 'world' championship, not a European one."

"We will try and find a way to support the teams to travel because we must travel," he added and later explained to media over an informal dinner that small contributions from different groups – organisers, promoters, manufacturers and sponsors - that formulate the championship could make the process easier for teams to unpack the freight boxes on a more regular basis.



MONSTER ENERGY YAMAHA PRESENT MXGP EFFORT

It was an unusually quiet opening to the FIM Motocross World Championship in terms of presentations and formalities.

Rockstar Energy Suzuki hosted another breakfast social at their impressive workshop facility in Lommel to showcase both the MX1 and MX2 teams and the Belgians were joined by Italian-British contingent Monster Energy Yamaha as the only other 'ceremony' during the weekend.

Perhaps I'm a little impartial as yours-truly was chosen to present the four of six riders (Zach Osborne and Arnaud Tonus currently filling plaster casts on two continents) and stand next to the gleaming factory YZ450/250FM machinery and the Monster Energy girls but it was a highly visual event in the Monster Energy rig; the impact of the

videos, look and set-up hoping to match the ambition for the scope of the works team.

Yamaha equal KTM for the biggest official entry in the paddock, a major energy drink sponsor and same priority to prototype development (Christophe Charlier's YZ250FM is still the only Yamaha in Europe with fuel injection).

In a way some battle lines were drawn with Kawasaki missing some kind of exposure away from the track and KTM sure to catch up in the coming rounds with an event of their own but the low-key approach was understandable with Ken De Dycker's late defection to the team (allegedly not on a works motorcycle though) meaning the Austrian's were not quite ready to shout about their roster.





CLASSIFICATION & WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

MX1 OVERALL RESULT

Riders

1	Tony Cairoli, ITA	KTM
2	Clement Desalle, BEL	Suzuki
3	Steven Frossard, FRA	Yamaha
4	Gautier Paulin, FRA	Kawasaki
5	Kevin Strijbos, BEL	KTM

MX2 OVERALL RESULT

Riders

1	Jeffrey Herlings, NED	KTM
2	Joel Roelants, BEL	Kawasaki
3	Tommy Searle, GBR	Kawasaki
4	Jeremy Van Horebeek, BEL	KTM
5	Jordi Tixier, FRA	KTM

MX1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP STANDINGS (AFTER 1 OF 16 ROUNDS)

Riders	Points
1 Tony Cairoli	50
2 Steven Frossard	44
3 Clement Desalle	40
4 Gautier Paulin	32
5 Kevin Strijbos	31

MX2 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP STANDINGS (AFTER 1 OF 16 ROUNDS)

Riders	Points
1 Jeffrey Herlings	50
2 Joel Roelants	42
3 Tommy Searle	42
4 Jeremy Van Horebeek	36
5 Jordi Tixier	29



THE FONT OF IT ALL...

By Adam Wheeler

Someone commented to me on Monday afternoon that watching the MX2 class and the Jeffrey Herlings benefit was like reverting back to the Stefan Everts era. The point being made that the race verged on the edge of being decided before a wheel had even rolled in the grooves of the gate.

You can never place your mortgage payment on a sure thing in racing as there are simply too many variables; a bike problem here, first corner crash there, stubborn backmarkers elsewhere. You get the jist.

But all of us were accustomed to Herlings' prowess at Valkenswaard and with Marvin Musquin and Ken Roczen disappearing over the past two years there is now a lack of exceptional talent that can even try to force a match with the Dutchman. One can only hope – in the interests of the 'show' – that Herlings doesn't bring his sand clogs onto the hard-pack. Tommy Searle is a special rider, Joel Roelants has a great chance in 2012 and Jeremy Van Horebeek knows it is time to deliver but the rest of the field (minus the absent Zach Osborne and Arnaud Tonus) are all still on the upward curve of momentum and education.

It might take several seasons before MX2 can rival anything like the depth, colour and possibilities of MX1. Or perhaps it isn't even designed to be like that?

One way of thinking would point to the fact that the pyramid structure of the sport, constructed by the FIM and UEM and reinforced by Youthstream, is starting to become sturdy and become more prominent on the racing scene. The emphasis on the European 85cc to 125cc two-stroke series and the European MX2 (the last

two benefitting from billing alongside MX1 at GP events) is creating a career stream and channeling all the promising riders from the continent (and beyond) into a fixed path to the top. Before the process to a well-supported berth and prospering professional status might have been a bit haphazard and totally reliant on domestic championships.

...it might take several seasons for MX2 to rival the depth of MX1...

Now the goal is to get on the international stage quickly and if your rider happens to be special then the ultimate schooling awaits on the Grand Prix platform in MX2. Brands and companies are already seizing on this and Suzuki and KTM (unsurprisingly) have much-hyped special individuals in the forms of Jorge Zaragoza and Jorge Prado (125cc and 85cc respectively and excitingly for Spain) and Brian Hsu (85cc, Taiwanese-German).

The make-up of MX2 is bound to evolve until the next 'lightning bolt' like Roczen, Herlings or Musquin come along. It doesn't happen every year and it appears that Herlings has the richest chance of success for Holland over the next six months.

Despondently for the rest of the pack wanting to chase the KTM man, Herlings can stay in place for another five years before reaching the age limit of 23...or maybe the unpopular but necessary rule could change again?

CYRIL DESPRES
2012 & 4 TIME DAKAR
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MotoGP

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LOSAIL · APRIL 8th · Rnd 1 of 18

MotoGP winner: Jorge Lorenzo, Yamaha

Moto2 winner: Marc Marquez, Suter

Moto3 winner: Maverick Vinales, FTR Honda



PRIX OF QATAR



LOSAIL: LORENZO'S LAND AGAIN...

By Gavin Emmett, Photos by Honda Pro Images/Northcott, Milagro, Ducati Corse Press, www.yamahamotogp.com

3600 bulbs showed the way around Losail



There was a point in the opening race of the new 1000cc MotoGP era that most spectators probably sensed a familiar sinking feeling. Casey Stoner had prized open a seemingly unassailable lead from Jorge Lorenzo, fans-favourite Valentino Rossi was slumping towards the back of the prototypes and there were huge gaps across a strung-out field.

But then something happened. Something that everyone who follows MotoGP will hope is a sign of more excitement to come in 2012.

Stoner suffered a recurrence of an arm-pump problem he had last suffered at Silverstone in 2010 and as his lap times dropped, suddenly Lorenzo began to close him down. The Yamaha rider was joined in the hunt by a resurgent

Lorenzo broke Stoner's run of three consecutive pole positions at Doha...the next day would see his GP career win total rise to 39



Dani Pedrosa, who after a weekend bemoaning consistent chatter issues with the new Honda RC213V, took advantage of another of his lightning starts to cling on to Lorenzo's coat-tails.

Often maligned for his lack of aggression, Pedrosa showed it in spades as he squeezed through on Lorenzo, only for his compatriot to return the favour just a few corners later.

Briefly it looked as if this may help Stoner hang on to his slender advantage with just four and a half laps to go, but Lorenzo had other ideas. He took Stoner quickly once he saw the pressure he was under from Pedrosa, and used the world champion like a back marker to gain some crucial lengths on his countryman. It took Pedrosa two laps to pass his Repsol Honda team-mate successfully, although there



First front row for Cal Crutchlow. Qatar is a good qualifying venue for the Brits as James Toseland managed second place on his MotoGP debut in 2008.

was much jockeying for position and by that time Lorenzo was just out of reach and able to cruise to the line ahead by just under a second.

Behind the scrap for the rostrum, there was a tense Monster Yamaha Tech3 tussle between Andrea Dovizioso and Cal Crutchlow, which will have had Hervé Poncharal watching the race through the cracks in his fingers. The Italian was proving an insurmountable obsta-

cle for the impressive Briton, his late-braking stymieing every single one of Crutchlow's overtaking attempts.

However just as the race lit up at the front, Dovizioso finally succumbed, and the Coventry-born rider would post back-to-back fourth places just hundredths ahead of his new teammate.



Nicky Hayden was top Ducati after a great race within the race. The brand is now in its longest dry spell (13 races) without a podium since entering MotoGP in 2003

A dispirited Ben Spies had dropped through the pack to a lowly eleventh place, the victim of a chatter issue caused by damage to the frame of his Yamaha M1 after his two crashes over the weekend. However in front of the Texan there was a battle royale between Hayden, Bautista, Barbera and new-boy Stefan Bradl. The German was extremely impressive in his MotoGP debut, eventually a victim of experience as the trio picked him off when the tyres

started to wear. Nonetheless, he did pick up a place and finish eighth when Barbera ran off track when attacking Hayden for sixth entering the final lap.

Hayden took that sixth spot as top Ducati ahead of Bautista, but the worrying thing for the factory was the performance of Valentino Rossi. Although the nine-time world champ got a decent start he ran off track whilst in a tussle with Barbera and rarely looked like the man

An empty track for Valentino but not by design. With tenth place he was three positions worse off than in 2011 at Qatar



who has 105 GP wins. Motivation is starting to be questioned by some quarters of the media, and the tension between rider and factory is palpable.

The distance between Rossi and the front-runners is also bigger than ever and the idea of closing the gap to the top-three quickly is diminishing just as fast. Moreso because we

were left with a podium full of happy riders; Lorenzo for obvious reasons, Pedrosa because he had been able to transform an unrideable bike into one capable of victory and even Stoner, who now believes he has more than enough pace to win and just needs to overcome what he sees as a minor physical setback.

The new CRT star...



And what of the CRTs? Well, first things first none were lapped and although James Ellison was on the home straight as Lorenzo came through for victory, he had run off track in the early stages. There wasn't too much racing between the hybrid bikes but on an impressive debut Yonny Hernandez did well to keep Randy de Puniet at bay for so long.

As expected Colin Edwards was fastest CRT out there, and in fact was within two seconds of Spies at the flag, although this was more down to the latter's technical issues rather than the sheer pace of the BMW Suter. Edwards has proved his value to the NGM Mobile team however, and earned the right to roll into parc fermé for the valuable TV coverage and photos on their behalf.



An impressive debut for the second reigning champion in the class, Stefan Bradl. He was the youngest German to compete in MotoGP since Alex Hoffman in 2002



In 2008 Casey won the first MotoGP race held under floodlights. A sixth victory in Qatar was not forthcoming





Marc Marquez was healed up and seeing OK...Thomas Luthi might beg to differ

Tech3 tangle. Crutchlow and
Dovizioso were a black blur
for most of the race



Tech3 tangle. Crutchlow and
Dovizioso were a black blur
for most of the race

Small piece of history for
Maverick with the first ever
Moto3 victory...



PEDROSA GOES OVERBOARD

Dani Pedrosa's began the weekend in the desert under a dark cloud after he was arrested in Valencia whilst sitting a yacht captain's exam. The Saturday prior to the Qatar race saw Pedrosa caught by the police along with 20 other people, as part of a raid on the use of earpieces in the licence testing process.

Once Spain's icon of the clean-cut image he was the son every mother wanted to have according to advertising for a popular chocolate drink. However after his indiscretion, Pedrosa was forced to make an apologetic statement.

"After following bad advice, I made a mistake," explained the three-time world champ.

"You can either ignore or learn from your mistakes, and I have learnt from this one. I want to apologise publicly to my fans and those who have put trust in me."



Moto2 & Moto3 AT LOSAIL

Moto2 was everything we've come to expect in the intermediate GP class, a non-stop barrage of thrills, spills and controversy. The major talking point will be a last lap manoeuvre from eventual winner Marquez. The Spaniard seemingly forced Tom Luthi to take evasive action by pulling in front of the Swiss rider as they dived into the braking zone at turn one. Luthi's uncharacteristic thump on Marquez's arm during the cool-down lap told his side of the story, but as he accepted the trophy Marquez will only have been reflecting on the fact that he had feared for his career just a couple of months ago.

The introduction of Moto3 has dismayed purists but whilst they can point to the bikes not necessarily sounding like thoroughbreds, they cannot fail to have been charmed by the opening race in the new class. Won in style by a 17 year-old sensation in Maverick Viñales, it also seems to have uncovered another starlet in 16 year-old Romano Fenati. Fearless as he opened up a lead in the first few laps, the Italian provided an inspiring display on his Grand Prix debut to take second place. The fun behind in a seven-way scrap for third provided the best of the entertainment, with pole-sitter Sandro Cortese finally clinching the spot ahead of a feisty Luis Salom.

ROSSI TO RACE A FERRARI

Although the headline may suggest the Italian has already had enough of racing a Ducati after just one round of the MotoGP World Championship, instead it refers to a one-off drive for Valentino Rossi in the Blancpain Endurance Series at Monza this April 14th. 'The Doctor' is set to take a Monster-liveried Ferrari 458 to track for the Kessel Racing team and will be partnered by his lifelong friend Alessio "Uccio" Salucci.

The GT event features a whole host of car manufacturers including Aston Martin, Lamborghini and McLaren and the nine-times world champion on two wheels will feature familiar names of the four-wheel circuit such as Mark Blundell and David Brabham.



CLASSIFICATIONS & WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP STANDINGS

MotoGP RESULT

Riders

1	Jorge Lorenzo, SPA	Yamaha
2	Dani Pedrosa, SPA	Honda
3	Casey Stoner, AUS	Honda
4	Cal Crutchlow, GBR	Yamaha
5	Andrea Dovizioso, ITA	Yamaha

MotoGP CHAMPIONSHIP STANDINGS (AFTER 1 OF 18 ROUNDS)

Riders	Points
1 Jorge Lorenzo	25
2 Dani Pedrosa	20
3 Casey Stoner	16
4 Cal Crutchlow	13
5 Andrea Dovizioso	11



Moto2 RESULT

Riders

1	Marc Marquez, SPA	Suter
2	Andrea Iannone, ITA	Speed Up
3	Pol Espargaro, SPA	Kalex
4	Esteve Rabat, SPA	Kalex
5	Thomas Luthi, SUI	Suter

Moto2 CHAMPIONSHIP STANDINGS (AFTER 1 OF 17 ROUNDS)

Riders	Points
1 Marc Marquez	25
2 Andrea Iannone	20
3 Pol Espargaro	16
4 Esteve Rabat	13
5 Thomas Luthi	11

Moto3 RESULT

Riders

1	Maverick Viñales, SPA	FTR Honda
2	Romano Fenati, ITA	FTR Honda
3	Sandro Cortese, GER	KTM
4	Luis Salom, SPA	Kalex KTM
5	Miguel Oliveira, POR	Suter Honda

Moto3 CHAMPIONSHIP STANDINGS (AFTER 1 OF 17 ROUNDS)

Riders	Points
1 Maverick Viñales	25
2 Romano Fenati	20
3 Sandro Cortese	16
4 Luis Salom	13
5 Miguel Oliveira	11



CONTINUAL CHANGE...

By Gavin Emmett

We hadn't even had a look at the new 1000s out on the Losail track before the rumours had begun about future modifications to the MotoGP regulations. After lengthy meetings between Carmelo Ezpeleta of Dorna and the MSMA at Jerez tests, a Grand Prix Commission meeting took place on Saturday night in Losail and there are several theories about what the series organiser has proposed to do next.

With 9 CRT machines helping to boost the MotoGP grid to 21 riders, Dorna can most likely count on vehement backing from the FIM and IRTA about any new proposals and it is rumoured that it will use this strong position to impose a single bike rule on the premier class next year.

This is perhaps the most digestible proposition for the factories, considering the fact that it would most likely have the double impact of increasing grid numbers whilst reducing costs, and wouldn't affect technological advancement too much. However it wouldn't be as easily implementable as in the smaller classes, where rain races can be stopped and shortened unlike the 'flag-to-flag' MotoGP affairs.

It seems very likely there will be a request for a single ECU and a rev limit, bitter pills the factories may not want to swallow, as well as a limit on the cost of leasing bikes – something which Ducati has already admitted it would find hard to implement.

It all depends on which direction the Grand Prix Commission collectively want to take the sport.

...very likely there will be a request for a single ECU and rev limiter...

If the requests are to keep leased bikes but at a much lower cost, then my opinion is that whilst CRT still represents a big part of the MotoGP future, the old Team KR approach of leasing a factory engine and housing it in your own chassis is perhaps the way that could suit all parties best – providing a cheaper option whilst keeping performance at the top level. And it's also remarkably similar to what's going on in Moto3.

The problem with that is would the big factories accept being beaten by what is essentially a homemade piece of kit? Or are they just going to have to lump it?





BACKPAGE

2012 Monster Energy girls







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'On-track Off-road' is a free, bi-weekly publication for the screen focused on bringing the latest perspectives on events, blogs and some of the very finest photography from the three worlds of the FIM Motocross World Championship, the AMA Motocross and Supercross series' and MotoGP. 'On-track Off-road' will be published online at www.ontrackoffroad.com every other Tuesday. To receive an email notification that a new issue available with a brief description of each edition's contents simply enter an address in the box provided on the homepage. All email addresses will be kept strictly confidential and only used for purposes connected with OTOR.

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